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The RSC Corner

by Ron Korcak, Chair, RSC

We're getting closer! Well that's how I started off this column for the summer issue of RadChronicle in reference to the status of the Radiation Safety Management System (RSMS). Initially, it was hoped that September 1, 2005 would be the release date to the user community; however, in debugging and assuring correct formats a few more small hurdles need to be addressed including a significant change in the on-line permit application process. So by the time you receive the next issue you will be merrily zipping through RSMS! The RSS is also working on a user guidelines document to assist the user community in the new software.

At the August meeting of the Radiation Safety Committee security was again a big topic. There were questions concerning wireless access security to RSMS as well as personnel security programs and requirements. Security of wireless access for internet applications is still a developing technology. New government standards are being developed and will, in the near-term, be adopted by federal agencies to ensure the same level of security for wireless devices as hard-wired internet access. We were again assured that since ARS is hosting RSMS the system is secure. You will be hearing more on the requirements for secure wireless access. On the personnel side, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission is proposing enhanced personnel security requirements. The proposal would require personnel using radioactive materials be designated as Moderate Risk Public Trust (essentially a minimum background investigation). Employees who work with high risk radioactive materials may have to be designated as High Risk Public Trust. Again, as these proposed enhancements become requirements, we will let you know.

That brings up the issue of physical security enhancements. As noted in the last 'Corner', if you have a portable gauge you should, by now, be aware of the new required security arrangements. This is essentially 'two levels of locking' for security. If you have not heard from RSS please contact them as soon as possible.

The annual LRPO training session in College Station, Texas held in June was one of the largest classes to date. Progress continues on providing more on-line training. This December an on-line gauge trainer course will be offered.

The Radiation Safety Committee also approved the FY 2006 RSS budget. Budget increases are due primarily to increased salary costs. There was a cost reduction in the 2006 budget for dosimetry services. We were able to renegotiate pricing with the new vendor. Funds were made available for programming changes in RSMS; however, funding for RSMS will be reduced in the following years once we are sure the system is

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Radiation Sources Secure after Hurricane Katrina

ARS and APHIS Locations Ensure Source Control

APHIS safety staff visited their agency's laboratory in Gulfport, Mississippi, within a few days of Hurricane Katrina to assess the damage. During their visit they were able to account for all of their electron capture detectors (each containing about 15 millicuries of nickel-63) and then secure them so they would not be inadvertently disposed during restoration activities.

When ARS was able to reach their laboratory in New Orleans, Louisiana, and assess the damage they determined that their vials of phosphorus-32 were probably intact, however, there was such extensive damage to the facility that they could not get into all laboratories to inventory the radioactive material. ARS is developing plans

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meeting the needs and expectations of the user community and the RSS staff.

Lastly, if you or someone you work with is planning to retire or move to another job it is important that you keep RSS in the loop. We need to assure that we have appropriate permit holders and users identified.

As always, if you have any comments or questions or would like to see an issue or concern covered in the RadChronicle, please feel free to e-mail me at KorcakR@ba.ars.usda.gov.

Radiation Safety Reporting

Information regarding situations similar to those described below should be reported to the Radiation Safety Staff immediately:

- Any accident involving radioactive materials.
- Lost or damaged radioactive materials.
- Any threat, theft, smuggling, vandalism, or terrorist activity involving radioactive materials.

As always, please contact RSS with your radiation safety concerns.

Decay-In-Storage Waste

The USDA's current NRC license authorizes disposal of waste by decay-in-storage for isotopes with physical half-lives of 120 days or less. Certain requirements must be met as a condition of this license. Waste that is stored for decay must be stored for a minimum of 10 half-lives.

All waste must be labeled with the isotope, activity, and date it was put into storage.

After 10 half-lives, the waste must be surveyed to ensure that radiation levels cannot be distinguished from background radiation levels. All radioactive labels must be removed or defaced prior to disposing of this waste as ordinary trash.

This disposal must be documented in writing. The following information must be recorded:

- The name of the individual performing the survey.
- The dose rate measured at the survey of the waste container.
- The background dose rate.
- The instrument used to perform the survey.
- The date of the disposal.
- The date that the radioactive material was placed in storage.

These records must be retained for a period of three years.

If you have any questions regarding disposal of isotopes, contact our office.

Radiation Sources Secure After Hurricane Katrina

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to get back into the facility to inventory the radioactive materials and perform contamination surveys to ensure worker safety during restoration activities. Fortunately, no USDA facilities using radioactive materials were affected by Hurricane Rita.

Following USDA radiation safety program requirements for storage and security of radioactive materials helps ensure that we won't lose any sources during damaging storms. When tornadoes heavily damaged laboratories at the ARS research center in Beltsville, Maryland, no radioactive material was lost and no contamination of laboratories occurred because all radioactive material had been placed in their secured storage containers.

If damaging storms, flooding, or other catastrophes are predicted in your area you should take steps to secure radioactive material. You can move the materials to a higher level within the building or to a room or building that is less likely to suffer severe damage. Prior to flooding that was predicted in the Grand Forks, North Dakota, area in the mid-1990's, ARS laboratory personnel moved the radioactive material stored in the basement and first floor to the second floor of the building. By ensuring that no radioactive material was located in the flooded basement and first floor they made the facility clean-up safer, quicker, and less costly.

Update on New RSMS

We've been promising you the web based Radiation Safety Management System (RSMS) for quite some time but what does that mean to you, the associate user, the permit holder, or the LRPO?

It means you can log on to any computer that has internet access and:

- Request an approval to order radioactive material.
- Track your waste inventory.
- Keep track of survey instruments.
- View your latest inspection report and any recommendations or violations.
- Print shipping papers for gauges.
- Update your training profile.
- Renew your permit.
- Amend your permit.
- Document laboratory surveys.
- Add associate users.
- Request dosimetry.
- Print a signed copy of your permit.
- Access the Radiation Safety Staff website.

Implementation of the system to the field will begin in phases this month. We hope you share in our excitement as we look forward to change and progress!

Attention All Individuals Interested in Gauge Training

The Radiation Safety Staff will be presenting its Nuclear Gauge Train-the-Trainer course December 6-8, 2005 at Texas A&M University, College Station, TX. If you are interested in attending this training, complete the registration form and fax it to RSS at 301-504-2450. The deadline for registration is November 1, 2005.

For more information and to access the registration form, visit the RSS website, www.rss.usda.gov and open the Training Schedule page or contact Jack Patterson at 301-504-2445 if you have any questions.

June 2005 LRPO/Irradiator Training

Another outstanding LRPO/Irradiator training class was held at Texas A&M University June 5-11th. The graduating class group photo is shown below. Congratulations to everyone who attended!

How to Contact RSS:

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